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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 VATICAN 000086

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KIRF](#) [PHUM](#) [PK](#) [CE](#) [VT](#)

SUBJECT: VATICAN ON CHRISTIANS IN PAKISTAN, RECONCILIATION IN SRI LANKA

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CLASSIFIED BY: Rafael P. Foley, A/DCM.

REASON: 1.4 (b), (d)

¶1. (C) Summary: The Vatican expressed solidarity with the Christian community in Pakistan following recent attacks, and pointed to education, jobs and changes in blasphemy laws as the way forward. In Sri Lanka, the message of the newly-installed Catholic Archbishop of Colombo to the Government of Sri Lanka would be to give the Tamils wide margins of autonomy to foster reconciliation. With a new Archbishop in Colombo, the Church would be more active in advocating concrete steps to maintain peace. End summary.

¶2. (C) Monsignor Joseph Murphy, director for South and Central Asia at the Vatican's Secretariat of State, told A/DCM on August 5 that extremist groups were behind the organized violence against Christians in Gojra and elsewhere in Pakistan. Murphy said that according to the bishop of Faisalabad, the particularly difficult to extinguish fuel used in burning the Christian homes was not easy to obtain, an indication of advanced planning on the part of the violence instigators. The Holy See's Secretary of State, Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone, sent the bishop a message of solidarity following the attacks (see paragraph 5 for the text of the message).

¶3. (C) Murphy said that Pakistan's blasphemy laws created an environment that led to discrimination against Christians and Ahmadi Muslims. While he did not foresee that such laws would be repealed any time soon, Murphy thought that removing blasphemy cases from the jurisdiction of lower, local courts could help decrease their use as a tool to blackmail, extort or carry out revenge on religious minorities. Other measures to protect poor Christians in Pakistan included, according to Murphy, increasing the number of poor Christians attending Catholic private schools (which he said are the best in the country and are mostly educating children from wealthy Muslim families) and to have more civil service jobs go to religious minorities.

¶4. (C) Regarding Sri Lanka, Murphy was excited about the new installation of the new Archbishop of Colombo, Malcom Ranjith. Murphy said that Ranjith, who is Sinhalese and was previously the second-in-command at the Vatican's office in charge of worship and the administration of sacraments, "has the ear of the Sri Lankan government and of Tamil leaders." Murphy expected Ranjith to deliver a clear message to the government of Sri Lanka that the Tamils should be allowed wide margins of autonomy in order to foster reconciliation and prevent a return

to violence. Ranjith would also encourage the government to allow internally displaced persons in camps to return to their homes. Murphy said that health reasons had prevented the previous Archbishop to be very active. Murphy predicted that the Catholic Church in Sri Lanka would have a higher profile with Ranjith.

15. (U) Text of the August 3 telegram from Cardinal Bertone, Secretary of State of the Holy See, to the Most Reverend Joseph Coutts, bishop of Faisalabad.

Begin text:

The Holy Father was deeply grieved to learn of the senseless attack on the Christian community of Gojra city which resulted in the tragic killing of innocent men, women, and children, and immense destruction. He asks you to convey his heartfelt condolences to the families of the victims and to express his solidarity with all who have experienced this wanton act. At the same time His Holiness charges you strongly to encourage the whole diocesan community, and all Christians in Pakistan, not to be deterred in their efforts to help build a society which, with a profound sense of trust in religious and human values, is marked by mutual respect among all its members. In the name of God he appeals to everyone to renounce the way of violence which causes so much suffering and to embrace the way of peace. To the families and to all who mourn their dead in faith and in the hope which draws its certainty from the resurrection, the Holy Father cordially imparts his Apostolic Blessing as a pledge of consolation and strength in the Lord.

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End text.  
NOYES